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Conservatives* and Coalition after the First World War

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The question whether to ally with a section of the Liberals, or to stand separately, was the most divisive which the Conservative party faced after 1918. For six years its members quarreled about it and, at one point, came near to splitting as seriously as the Liberals had recently done. The controversy revived, in a mild form, in the early 1930s. The following article is an attempt to explain why Conservatives were so deeply and persistently divided. To answer this question, two neglected aspects of the controversy particularly need studying: the merits of the coalitionists' case and the strength of their supporters. Some historians have tended to view the controversy through the antioalitionists' eyes and have, consequently, focused on the personal ambitions of the leading coalitionists.¹ Maurice Cowling's recent work, *The Impact of Labour 1920-1924*,² describes the coalitionists' motives more fully, and often with great discernment, but is misleading in major respects. It exaggerates the significance of the desire to resist Labour, which, although important, was not "the central fact in political calculation"³ among either coalitionists or their opponents. Also, the work explains events too much in terms of detailed maneuvers among eminent politicians. The resulting narrative—for example the account of the fall of the Lloyd George coalition—is sometimes confusing, as well as unbalanced.

Seen in perspective, the coalitionists' strength lay in the anxiety of Conservatives, and many Liberals, about three problems which lasted for much of the interwar period. In different forms, these problems weakened parliamentary democracy in Italy, France, and Germany. They were: the prospect, or the reality, of a socialist party in power; the difficulty of ensuring stable government—in Britain's case because of the absence of an effective two-party system; and the existence of economic difficulties

*Although "Unionist" was the more common party label until 1921, I have, for simplicity, used the alternative term "Conservative" throughout the article.

¹ For example, T. Wilson, *The Downfall of the Liberal Party 1914-1935* (London, 1966), pp. 196, 222; Lord Beaverbrook, *The Decline and Fall of Lloyd George* (New York, 1963), pp. 10-11, 172-74.

² Maurice Cowling, *The Impact of Labour 1920-1924* (Cambridge, 1971). This article was written before the book was published.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

which were too great and controversial for one parliamentary party in Britain—or any combination of parliamentary parties in the other countries—to handle competently.

The controversy originated in the decision of Lloyd George and Bonar Law, the respective leaders of the Coalition Liberals and Conservatives, to continue their alliance in peacetime. It is not clear when they reached this decision. They probably took it for granted that the coalition should be prolonged in order to tackle immediate postwar tasks, like peacemaking and demobilization. Some Conservatives, including the elder statesman Lord Long, the de facto leader of the Conservative peers, Lord Curzon, the party chairman, Sir George Younger, and some back-benchers, wanted to limit the coalition's life to the time needed for such tasks.⁴ It seems likely that their case was never rejected, but simply went by default. The fact that the "coupon election" occurred after the war ended, and so gave the coalition a mandate for a full peacetime parliament, was not planned. It was due to the unexpectedly sudden collapse of Germany. But one cannot conclude—as two writers have apparently done—that the decision to continue the coalition was taken mainly for short-term party gain.⁵ For it is clear that Lloyd George and Bonar Law believed that there was an overwhelming case, on national grounds, for prolonging the coalition indefinitely.

Both saw the existing coalition as essential for the task of reconstruction. Lloyd George, and his radical colleagues like Christopher Addison, valued coalition for its power to achieve social and economic reforms.⁶ Bonar Law saw it as the only means of achieving moderate solutions to controversial problems and forestalling extreme demands by a radical-socialist alliance.⁷ Probably all coalition supporters hoped to avoid reviving prewar battles between Liberals and Conservatives over home rule, the Welsh church, and tariffs. Such a revival seemed generally abhorrent in the idealistic atmosphere of 1918.⁸ Moreover, it would obviously obstruct other postwar tasks. As it happened, the Coalition Liberals and Conservatives found it unexpectedly easy to agree on their approach to these questions in 1918.⁹ The threat of labor—in the form of

⁴ Younger to Law, March 16, 1918, Bonar Law Papers, 83/1/9, Beaverbrook Library, London; *Morning Post* (London), November 6, 1918, p. 4 (hereafter cited as *Morning Post*).

⁵ Wilson, p. 135; R. Douglas, "The Background to the 'Coupon' Election Arrangements," *English Historical Review* 86 (April 1971): 336.

⁶ C. Addison, *Four and a Half Years*, 2 vols. (London, 1934), 2:528; Lloyd George's Westminster speech on November 16, 1918, cited in *Times* (London), November 18, 1918, p. 4 (hereafter cited as *Times*).

⁷ British Museum, Balfour MSS 49693, fols. 278-79.

⁸ Editorial in *Times*, August 1, 1918, p. 7; J. M. Robertson, "The General Election," *Contemporary Review* 114 (December 1918): 618.

⁹ Diary of Lord Bayford (formerly Sir Robert Sanders), Bayford Papers, November 10, 12,

politically inspired strikes or electoral gains by the Labour party—provided a motive for continuing the coalition which was certainly important, although it was less publicized. If Liberals and Conservatives fell apart, Labour candidates seemed likely to make sweeping gains in an electorate that was largely new and unknown. Even after the “coupon” arrangements were made, the Labour party was generally expected by party managers and journalists to win over 100 seats.¹⁰ Mutinies or strikes seemed likely to be dangerous during the period of demobilization and the winding down of war production. Later, a Conservative whip recalled Lloyd George’s saying that a general election at this stage might produce “a Bolshevik Govt.,” and himself added: “I always held that view and did all I could to press for an election before Xmas in order that we might get a majority large enough to stand the racket.”¹¹

Party interest—a factor so much emphasized by contemporary and later commentators—certainly helped to prolong the coalition. For Lloyd George and his colleagues, coalition was perhaps their only means of retaining power. For the Conservatives, it was a means of benefiting from Lloyd George’s prestige. But such considerations cannot be described as dominant. Nor can they really be disentangled from considerations of national interest. In this case more than in most, the two types of motive blended and reinforced each other.

Conservative M.P.’s showed themselves generally satisfied with the renewal of the coalition. Even before the government’s decision was known, 175 coalitionist back-benchers, of whom a majority were probably Conservatives, sent Lloyd George a resolution favoring an electoral alliance and asserting that a return to party government would be “a national danger.” Of the other Conservatives, “a considerable number” were reported on November 6 to be withholding their assent to the resolution, only because the government had not yet announced its policy on controversial issues.¹² Allowing for the numerous Conservative members normally absent on military duties, these reports probably show that a large majority of the Conservative back-benchers available to sign the resolution at Westminster expressed support for coalition.¹³ When the terms of alliance were revealed to a party meeting on November 12, those

1918, Conservative Research Department, London (including Bayford Diary); Addison, pp. 588-89.

¹⁰ *Times*, December 14, 1918, p. 9; *Morning Post*, October 31, 1918, p. 4. In the event, Labour won fifty-seven seats and secured 20.8% of the total poll, compared with forty-two seats and 6.4% of the poll at the previous general election in 1910.

¹¹ Bayford Diary, May 8, 1919; see also W. Churchill, *The World Crisis*, 5 vols. (London, 1929), 5:59-61.

¹² *Morning Post*, November 6, 1918, p. 4; November 8, 1918, p. 4.

¹³ There were 281 Conservative members at this time, of whom twenty-nine were ministers (excluding parliamentary private secretaries).

present showed themselves "well satisfied."¹⁴ Party activists in the constituencies were on the whole less contented. In many constituencies, they or their candidates proved very reluctant to abstain in favor of couponed Liberal candidates.¹⁵ Nevertheless, there is strong evidence that most Conservative supporters at this stage favored prolonging the coalition. The *Times* parliamentary correspondent held this view and cited as evidence the reports of Coalition Liberal candidates.¹⁶ As for the electorate in general, it showed little interest in party controversy at this election. It therefore seems fair to interpret the coalition's victory as an explicit verdict by the electorate in favor of coalition rather than party government.¹⁷

Just over a year later, Lloyd George and Bonar Law prepared to perpetuate the coalition by "fusing" their respective parties. The attempt to create a "Centre party," as it was called, was the boldest attack that has ever been attempted on the separate identity of the party organizations since their origins in the late nineteenth century. It was also a rejection of the prewar party system. The Asquithian Liberals—who were the main defenders of this system in 1920—and the *Times* accused the fusionists of intriguing unscrupulously to keep themselves in office. They particularly attacked Lloyd George, Winston Churchill, and Lord Birkenhead, the loudest advocates of fusion, whose willingness to form a coalition in 1910 had recently been revealed.¹⁸ But the fusionists had more creditable motives as well, and these were what counted with Bonar Law. The first was a conviction that coalition government was still essential. The government's original motives for continuing the coalition seemed fully vindicated by the events of the preceding year, especially by industrial unrest and by Labour's success in by-elections. The threat of Labour now formed the ministers' main argument for continuing the coalition. The second was continuing dissension among their supporters in the constituencies. This did most electoral damage in Coalition Liberal seats, where Conservatives tended to be apathetic, while Liberals tended to sympathize with the Asquithians. These troubles weakened the coalition's prestige and threatened to be serious if the government had to resort to a general election. The leaders and managers of the two parties considered that fusion of their respective organizations was the only real remedy.¹⁹ Bonar Law believed that the Conservative party would lose nothing by the

¹⁴ Bayford Diary, November 16, 1918.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, November 10, 27, 1918; *Morning Post*, November 8, 1918, p. 4.

¹⁶ *Times*, December 3, 1918, p. 9. It also seems significant that the *Morning Post*, which was right-wing and narrowly partisan, accepted the need for coalition.

¹⁷ Robertson (n. 8 above); Addison (n. 6 above), p. 598; *Times*, December 30, 1918, p. 9.

¹⁸ Editorial in *Times*, December 8, 1919, p. 15; C. F. G. Masterman, "Fusion: The First Phase," *Contemporary Review* 118 (August 1920): 177-90.

¹⁹ Bayford Diary, October 9, 1919, January 6, 1920; Bonar Law Papers, 83/1/9, 99/4/16, 99/8/4.

change—presumably on the grounds that it was the dominant partner. Even so, it is a remarkable sign of Lloyd George's authority in 1920 that Bonar Law was ready to make him the Conservative leader, which was what fusion in effect involved.²⁰ But the Centre party project was checked at the outset. The unexpected resistance of the Coalition Liberal ministers at a meeting with Lloyd George on March 16 killed it outright.

The overconfidence of Lloyd George and Bonar Law is largely explained by their apparent strength in the House of Commons. Those Conservatives—probably the great majority—who had professed themselves supporters of Lloyd George in the 1918 election were generally still loyal to him in 1920. "There can be no question," wrote the *Times* parliamentary correspondent in March, "that the great body of Unionists in the House of Commons regard Mr. Lloyd George, and not any of their party leaders, as their sheet-anchor."²¹ Therefore, it is probable that at this stage Bonar Law could have persuaded his party to accept fusion. A large section of it actually urged him to bring it about. This was the New Members Coalition Group, which included eighty-six of the 168 new Conservative members.²² Its members displayed some distinguishing characteristics of the war generation. A relatively high proportion of them—about half—saw active service in the war.²³ They were careless of old party labels and slogans. "We really thought that we could consign the old quarrels to limbo," wrote a leading member.²⁴ According to some of its members, the group fervently supported the ambitious program of social reform which Lloyd George issued in the 1918 election. There is substantial evidence for this in parliamentary debates on social reform and in the relatively high proportion of the group which voted for a motion by two of its members to increase the grants for dependents of the unemployed.²⁵ In 1919 the group was active and hopeful. In July, its members held a dinner which was

²⁰ Bonar Law to Balfour, March 24, 1920, Bonar Law Papers, 96/4. It was evidently unclear to Conservative M.P.'s how far Lloyd George would control the party organization (P. E. Pilditch to Bonar Law, March 25, *ibid.*).

²¹ *Times*, March 15, 1920, p. 6; *Annual Register* (London, 1920), p. 146.

²² The members of the group are listed in letters from F. E. Guest to Lloyd George on May 10, 1919 (Lloyd George Papers, Beaverbrook Library, London, F/21/3/21), and from C. Coote to Bonar Law on March 2, 1920 (Bonar Law Papers, 96/4). The number of new members is taken from J. M. McEwen, "Conservative and Unionist M.P.s 1914-1939" (Ph.D. diss., University of London, 1959), p. 124.

²³ *Dod's Parliamentary Companion*. The proportion of other Conservative newcomers was a third (McEwen, p. 129).

²⁴ Sir C. R. Coote, *Editorial: The Memoirs of Colin R. Coote* (London, 1967), p. 87 (hereafter cited as *Editorial*).

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 101; Sir O. Mosley, *My Life* (London, 1968), p. 90; Lord W. M. Conway, *Episodes in a Varied Life* (London, 1932), p. 145. The debates were on housing (April 7-8, 1919); educating the blind (March 12, 1920); raising unemployment benefit (February 24, 1921); and increasing dependents' grants (November 1, 1921). The government opposed the last on financial grounds. The Conservative group members voted twenty-four to fifteen against the proposal; other Conservatives voted seventy-one to nine against it.

addressed by Churchill, Lord Birkenhead, and—still more significantly—the Conservative chairman Sir George Younger and was publicized as a step toward a center party.²⁶ But they lacked organization and evidently did little more than dine and pass resolutions.²⁷ Their decline in 1922 suggests that many of them became disillusioned, and one cause of disillusionment is known to be their discovery of the strength of party loyalties.²⁸

The opponents of fusion, by contrast, were diffident and slow to act. Fusion was commonly discussed by M.P.'s from mid-1919 and was hinted at by Bonar Law in November. Yet it was not until March 23 that a group of peers and M.P.'s unsympathetic to the plan asked Bonar Law to declare the terms of amalgamation.²⁹ The hidden strength of the antifusionists is indicated by the fact that they represented a wide range of talent and opinion. They included Lord Henry Bentinck, a prominent social reformer, Samuel Hoare, one of "The Group" of talented back-benchers, and Lord Salisbury, one of the most respected Conservative peers, as well as Lord Robert Cecil and Neville Chamberlain.³⁰ By May, Salisbury and a group of peers and M.P.'s had organized themselves and were discussing how best to protect their party's integrity.³¹ But it was more than a year before they began to take collective action, under the title of "diehards."

In the Conservatives' extraparliamentary organization—the National Unionist Association—the antifusionists' position was stronger, but also uncertain. The NUA Executive constantly harassed Younger or Bonar Law on policy matters. For example, in December 1919, it criticized Bonar Law for not dissociating himself from a speech by Lloyd George.³² The Central Council, in November, called on Bonar Law for a comprehensive restatement of Conservative principles for the benefit of the new electorate. Many local associations were privately making the same demand at this time.³³ But another Council meeting, in February, rejected a similar motion by a large majority and may even have been prepared to approve of fusion. Thus, the antifusionists had reason to be apprehensive about the outcome of the party conference in June.³⁴ Their fears proved groundless. Not only did a motion in favor of perpetuating the coalition fail to pass,

²⁶ Lloyd George Papers, F/21/4/6.

²⁷ *Times*, August 20, 1919, p. 3; Mosley, p. 101; Sir C. R. Coote, *A Companion of Honour: The Story of Walter Elliott* (London, 1965), p. 73.

²⁸ Coote, *Editorial*, pp. 76–77; see below p. 250.

²⁹ *Times*, November 10, 1919, p. 12; Bonar Law Papers, 96/5/11.

³⁰ W. Ormsby Gore to Salisbury, March 17, 1920, Salisbury Papers, Hatfield House, Hatfield.

³¹ G. Locker-Lampson to Salisbury, May 7, 1920, *ibid.*

³² Younger to Law, April 13, 1921, Bonar Law Papers, 107/1/14; *Times*, December 19, 1919, p. 12.

³³ *Times*, December 11, 1919, p. 17; October, 1919, Bonar Law Papers, 96/1/7.

³⁴ A. Salvidge to Law, February 18, 1920, Bonar Law Papers, 96/3/20; Steel-Maitland to

but also it became evident that a large minority of delegates wanted to end the coalition immediately. The party activists—or at least a large proportion of them—were clearly becoming disgruntled by the submergence of their party's identity in the coalition.³⁵ No doubt their readiness to cooperate with other parties, and their admiration for Lloyd George, had waned since the war. And it is certain that Conservative supporters had accumulated formidable grievances against the government: generous wage settlements, leniency to Irish nationalists, interventionist ("socialistic") economic policies, and above all—the most hated legacy of the war—high taxation.³⁶

Thus, the fatal weaknesses of the Lloyd George coalition were appearing even in 1920. These weaknesses become clearer if one considers why other modern coalitions endured. Those of both world wars, and of 1931–32,³⁷ were united by manifest national crises. In those of 1895–1905 and 1932–40, the Liberal Unionists and Liberal Nationals, respectively, were subordinate partners who were united with the Conservatives by outstanding issues. None of these things was true of the Lloyd George coalition in 1921. As far as many Conservatives were concerned, its justification was disappearing. Both Lloyd George's prestige and the desire for a concerted drive for reconstruction were withering. By the end of the year, Labour seemed less formidable electorally, and, at the same time, Conservatives were aware that public opinion was moving in their favor.³⁸ On the other hand, causes of friction between Conservatives and the government grew more serious. They came to include the negotiations with Sinn Féin and certain policies particularly associated with Lloyd George and some of his Liberal colleagues, such as Christopher Addison and Edwin Montagu. About the middle of 1921, discontent with coalition began to grow perceptibly in the parliamentary party.³⁹ Moreover, it became normal at about this time for Conservative candidates in by-elections to qualify their support for coalition.⁴⁰ As early as August, Younger warned the new party leader, Austen Chamberlain, that party

F. D. Docker, August 3, 1920, Steel-Maitland Papers, Scottish Record Office, Edinburgh, uncatalogued box labeled "Party Matters, N.U.A."

³⁵ National Unionist Association Conference minutes, Conservative Central Office, London, 1920, pp. 15–17; Bayford Diary, June 23, 1920; Younger to Bonar Law, June 14, 1920, Lloyd George Papers, F/31/1/36.

³⁶ Bonar Law Papers, 99/3/24, 29; 99/4/16. Therefore it is an oversimplification to attribute the Conservatives' discontent mainly to the rise of Labour, as Cowling does (n. 2 above, p. 114).

³⁷ The character of the national government was radically changed in September 1932 by the resignation of Lord Snowden and the ten Samuelite Liberals.

³⁸ Bayford Diary, November 1, 1921.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, June 24; parliamentary correspondent in *Times*, August 11, 1921, p. 10.

⁴⁰ M. Fraser to Chamberlain, December 31, 1921, Austen Chamberlain Papers, 32/4/1, Birmingham University, Birmingham.

feeling would make it necessary to end the coalition before the next general election.⁴¹

In defiance of this advice, Chamberlain set out, with a determination which Bonar Law had lacked, to make the coalition permanent. In December he reexamined the possibility of fusion but rejected the step when he realized that it could only be the formal outcome of a long period of cooperation. As one of the former Liberal Unionists himself, he always had their example in mind.⁴² Therefore, he limited his aims to preserving the coalition government at the next election. He would thereby commit his party, in effect, to supporting coalition indefinitely, as he would no longer be able to argue that there were temporary and exceptional circumstances justifying its renewal. Chamberlain pursued this policy until, after nearly splitting the Conservative party, it was rejected at a meeting of Conservative M.P.'s at the Carlton Club on October 19, 1922. Thereupon he resigned, his leadership permanently discredited.

The question of why Chamberlain pursued his suicidal course has never been clearly answered. Miscalculation of party feeling is not the whole explanation. Admittedly, Chamberlain underestimated the opposition to coalition for a long time.⁴³ But he was eventually convinced by the party managers that, if he held an election, a large proportion of Conservative candidates would repudiate the coalition. Already, warnings of party feeling had repeatedly caused him to hesitate in his policy. But he let himself be persuaded by more confident colleagues, especially Lords Birkenhead and Balfour.⁴⁴ An obvious part of the explanation for Chamberlain's policy is that he neglected the interests of the party rank and file, and was too confident of the cabinet's indispensability. While lacking Bonar Law's sensitiveness to party discontent, he was convinced that the country's problems were still grave enough to make coalition necessary.⁴⁵ But the main explanation lies in Chamberlain's views about the Labour party, the existing party system, and the electorate. These views were probably shared by all Conservatives. He feared that the Labour party might win power with a parliamentary majority and enact economically ruinous measures, such as lavish doles, a capital levy, and large-scale nationalization.⁴⁶ He believed that the bulk of the electors enfranchised since 1918—who formed over 60 percent of the electorate—

⁴¹ Bayford Diary, August 21, 1921.

⁴² Chamberlain Papers, 32/4/16, 18/1/28.

⁴³ Chamberlain to Lloyd George, March 23, 1922, Chamberlain Papers, 23/6/20.

⁴⁴ Bayford Diary, July 29, 1922; L. Wilson to Younger, October 5, 1922, Bayford Papers; Sir C. Petrie, *Life and Letters of Sir A. Chamberlain*, 2 vols. (London, 1940), 2:196-98.

⁴⁵ Chamberlain's speech to NUA Council, February 21, 1922, printed in *Gleanings and Memoranda* 55 (February 1922): 281.

⁴⁶ Chamberlain's speech at Carlton Club meeting, October 19, 1922, printed in *ibid.*, 56 (October 1922): 487.

were volatile because “unattached . . . to any of the great Parties” and dangerously ignorant because of their lack of interest in politics. They might therefore respond to the Labour party’s appeals to their self-interest. This fear was especially great in 1922 because of the new problem of mass unemployment, from which the Labour party was apparently benefiting in by-elections.⁴⁷ The fact that Conservatives and many Liberals felt these fears of Labour and the electorate until 1931, and to a lesser degree thereafter, helps to explain the durability of the national government in the 1930s.⁴⁸ In the three- (or more exactly four-) party system of 1922, the Conservatives unaided could not expect to keep Labour out of power indefinitely. Indeed, Chamberlain maintained that they could not win an independent majority at an election held in 1922. Although by October the party managers disagreed with him on this point, they did agree that it was vital to preserve an electoral alliance with the Coalition Liberals.⁴⁹

Thus, Chamberlain had a strong case on Conservative grounds. What doomed his policy was his loyalty to Lloyd George, on whom Conservative dislike of the coalition increasingly focused.⁵⁰ Even though Lloyd George offered his resignation in February, Chamberlain and his colleagues believed that it would be disloyal to discard him for no reason other than the wishes of their followers.⁵¹ Moreover, Chamberlain sensed that to do so might wreck the alliance with the Coalition Liberals.⁵² Thus, he indirectly admitted that the Coalition Liberals were less akin to the Conservatives than the Liberal Unionists had been. When Conservative M.P.’s publicly deserted the coalition at an increasing rate in the summer recess, Chamberlain and his colleagues faced the choice of yielding to them or holding an election. They chose an election, intending thereby to stifle opposition and force waverers into line. Chamberlain calculated that even if many candidates did declare against coalition, they would renew their support when, after the election, they were faced with the alternative of a Labour government. But when he realized that he might be deserted by most of his party, including some of his colleagues, he decided, on October 15, to summon the Carlton Club meeting.⁵³

⁴⁷ Chamberlain’s speech to NUA Council, February 21, 1922, in *ibid.*, 55 (March 1922): 277; Petrie, 2:171; memo from W. Sutherland (ca. December 1921), Chamberlain Papers, 32/2/7; Bayford Diary, November 8, 1921.

⁴⁸ N. Skelton, “A Conservative Survey,” *Quarterly Review* 257 (July 1931): 157; R. Muir, “The Balance of Parties,” *Nineteenth Century* 118 (September 1935): 260–61.

⁴⁹ J. C. C. Davidson, *Memoirs of a Conservative*, ed. R. R. James (London, 1969), p. 120; L. Wilson to Chamberlain, September, 1922, Chamberlain Papers, 33/2/26.

⁵⁰ Lord Derby to Chamberlain, March 28, 1922, Chamberlain Papers, 33/1/55.

⁵¹ Petrie, 2:204–6.

⁵² L. Wilson to Younger, October 5, 1922, Bayford Papers.

⁵³ *Ibid.*; Petrie, 2:197–98, 200; Chamberlain to Birkenhead, October 12, 1922, Chamberlain Papers, 33/2/52.

Chamberlain's policy divided the Conservative party at all levels in 1922. The divisions became inevitable when, at the beginning of January, Lloyd George's whips revealed that the government was thinking of an early election. The idea was publicly denounced by Younger, supported on this occasion by practically all Conservatives.⁵⁴ This event stimulated the opponents of coalition, who were led by an organized group of peers and forty to fifty M.P.'s, generally known as "diehards."⁵⁵ They were on the whole politically experienced⁵⁶ and were ably supported by the national daily *Morning Post*. They were noisy and persistent in attacking both coalition as such and a wide range of the coalition's policies. After starting to act together, in about August 1921,⁵⁷ they often spoke and voted against the government. In February, a diehard deputation of thirty M.P.'s pressed Chamberlain to end the coalition.⁵⁸ In March and June they issued manifestos, the first of which they sent to the chairmen of all constituency associations in England and Wales.⁵⁹ The theme of the manifestos was simple: the coalition's policies in all spheres had been disastrous because they flouted "Unionist principles." These principles were left vague but were plainly reactionary in their implications. Consequently, the diehards earned the accusation of being out-of-date and unrealistic. But they had other arguments, which effectively answered Chamberlain's and appealed increasingly to moderate Conservatives. They argued that the most reliable barrier against Labour was the Conservative party, which, they added—with ample evidence to support them—was being divided and demoralized by the coalition. They condemned Chamberlain's call for an anti-socialist bloc as irresponsible, because it divided parties on class lines, and imprudent, because it presented Labour as the sole alternative government.⁶⁰ But the diehards weakened their own influence on M.P.'s—and may even have strengthened Chamberlain's—by their extremism and disloyalty. It is significant that their numbers in parliament did not increase appreciably during 1922.⁶¹ Thus, they deserved much less credit, or blame, for overthrowing the coalition than they

⁵⁴ Younger to Chamberlain, January 9, 1922, Chamberlain Papers, 32/2/23.

⁵⁵ Parliamentary correspondent in *Times*, August 11, 1921, p. 10; March 3, 1922, p. 12.

⁵⁶ Michael Kinnear has shown this in his paper, "The Diehards, 1921-22," read to a meeting of Canadian Historical Association, York University, Ontario, Canada, June 4, 1969. I am grateful to Kinnear for letting me see this paper.

⁵⁷ *Times*, August 11, 1921, p. 10.

⁵⁸ Chamberlain Papers, 33/1/9, 10.

⁵⁹ Text cited in *Gleanings and Memoranda* 55 (March 1922): 401, and 56 (June 1922): 97; Lord Salisbury to G. Hamilton, April 13, 1922, Salisbury Papers.

⁶⁰ Editorial in *Morning Post*, March 22, 1924; letter from S. Hoare in *Times*, October 16, 1922, p. 13; speeches by E. G. Pretymann and Bonar Law at Carlton meeting, printed in *Gleanings and Memoranda* 56 (October 1922): 489, 492.

⁶¹ *Quarterly Review* 239 (January 1923): 202; Lord Midleton to Salisbury, March 30, 1922, Salisbury Papers.

generally received. Their stand against the coalition probably had more effect in the constituency organizations.

Other members shared Chamberlain's views and appreciated the coalition's achievements. They also tried to influence the party. The New Members Coalition Group was still active. About seventy of its members, most of them Conservatives, met on March 7 and resolved in favor of continuing the coalition.⁶² But the group was to decline sadly by October, when it provided only twenty-five of the eighty-eight members who voted for coalition at the Carlton Club meeting. Six of the group had by then even joined the diehards.⁶³ What seems equally significant, though, is the strength of coalitionism outside the group. Thus, thirty Conservative backbenchers, only eight of whom belonged to the group, called a general party meeting for March 14, with the publicized intention of passing a resolution which supported Lloyd George, and indirectly criticized the diehards. The 200-odd M.P.'s who attended the meeting would not agree to pass the resolution. The *Times* and other anticoalitionist newspapers attributed this refusal to discontent with the coalition. In fact, it showed rather that most Conservatives refused to be associated with any faction, diehard or coalitionist.⁶⁴ This became apparent in the House of Commons on April 5, when a diehard, Sir William Joynson-Hicks, moved for a return to party government. An amendment loyal to the coalition was moved by a backbencher, Gerald Hurst, and passed by 198 Conservative votes to thirty-six.⁶⁵

The uncommitted majority of Conservatives clearly meant to remain loyal to the coalition government during the existing parliament. This was, after all, the course to which they were officially committed by the party meeting of November 12, 1918 and by the ensuing election. But they were increasingly opposed to renewing the coalition under Lloyd George's leadership at another general election. Until September, many were unaware or uncertain that Chamberlain intended to do so. Their opposition to Chamberlain hardened when they realized what his policy was and saw that it would seriously split the party. Consequently, the majority at the Carlton Club voted to fight the next general election as an independent party in order to be free to install a Conservative prime minister afterward. However, it is clear—from the separate assertions of

⁶² *Daily Chronicle*, March 8, 1922.

⁶³ Thomas Adair, Archibald Boyd-Carpenter, Viscount Curzon, Reginald Hall, Gideon Murray, and Alexander Sprot.

⁶⁴ *Times*, March 15, 1922, p. 12; *Observer* (London), March 12, 1922, p. 15; L. Wilson to Lloyd George, March 20, 1922, Lloyd George Papers, F/47/9/2; Chamberlain to Lloyd George, March 15, 1922, Chamberlain Papers, 26/6/65.

⁶⁵ Including tellers (Great Britain, *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, 5th ser., 152 [1922]: 2387-90); the division is analyzed in *Gleanings and Memoranda* 55 (April 1922): 510.

several M.P.'s—that most were willing for coalition government to continue.⁶⁶ The bad feeling that had arisen between coalitionists and their opponents makes it open to doubt whether the reconstruction of a coalition was possible. But Bonar Law, who formed a Conservative government after the Carlton meeting, did not need to consider it because he won a comfortable majority at the ensuing general election.

It is only by comparing the opinions and backgrounds of the coalitionists and anticoalitionists that one can fully understand why they opposed each other. Such a comparison will substantiate the common view that the diehards were rigid traditionalists, but will show that the coalitionists did not differ enough from the remaining Conservatives to be characterized simply. I have taken the groups to consist, in June 1922, of forty-seven diehards, eighty-eight members who voted for coalition at the Carlton meeting, and the 239 other Conservatives.⁶⁷ In length of parliamentary experience, only the diehards stood out. Although they had been relatively much strengthened in recent by-elections, the proportion of them which had first entered parliament before the 1918 election was significantly high (65 percent). The corresponding proportion of coalitionists (48 percent) was about the same as that of the remaining Conservatives.⁶⁸ In social background, both diehards and coalitionists differed significantly from the Conservative norm. Relatively high proportions of the diehards were recruited from the traditionally Conservative sources of the country gentry and the professional army and a relatively low proportion from business occupations, the importance of which had grown greatly in the Conservative party since the war. The coalitionists, by contrast, included relatively few members of the first two groups and relatively high proportions of both businessmen and professional men.⁶⁹

There was a corresponding difference between the regions and types of constituency which coalitionists and diehards, respectively, represented. As Kinnear shows in his electoral maps, “most Conservative M.P.'s who sat for old Liberal or Liberal Unionist areas voted in favour of the Coalition, while most who sat for safe Conservative seats”—which were

⁶⁶ G. K. Cockerill to Salisbury, August 5, 1922, Salisbury Papers; D. Herbert, G. L. Ward-Jackson, and P. Pilditch, in letters to the *Times*, December 29, 1923, p. 13; January 1, 1924, p. 13; January 3, 1924, p. 6; A. Griffith-Boscawen, *Memories* (London, 1925), p. 252.

⁶⁷ The diehards were those who signed the two manifestos, and four others who, according to Kinnear (n. 56 above, p. 2), publicly adopted this label. James lists the coalitionists in Davidson's *Memoirs* (n. 49 above), p. 129.

⁶⁸ *Dod's Parliamentary Companion*, successive issues; Davidson, pp. 129-33; McEwen (n. 22 above), p. 124.

⁶⁹ McEwen, pp. 159-60. McEwen's conclusions are based on an analysis of sixty prominent coalitionists, of whom fifty-seven are in my list, and sixty prominent anticoalitionists, of whom thirty-nine were diehards.

“mainly in the South of England”—voted against it.⁷⁰ Clearly, then, many coalitionists were influenced by a desire for Liberal votes in their own constituencies. Evidence from several regions indicates that this desire was usually due to the fear of Labour. The latter was the chief stimulus in one of the two main areas of coalitionist strength, the Scottish lowlands, and an important stimulus in another, Lancashire.⁷¹ Thus, coalitionism had strong local roots. The need for local coalitions against Labour was openly recognized by the spokesmen for the majority at the Carlton Club meeting. It was also respected, with a few exceptions, by the Conservative party managers in the 1922 election.⁷² The regional differences between the two sides in the coalition controversy were strongly reflected in the attitudes of some of the protagonists. Thus, Hurst, in opposing Joynson-Hick’s motion, stressed the contrast between “the rural and seaside constituencies,” represented by the leading diehards, and “the workshops and warehouses of Lancashire or . . . Yorkshire,” represented by himself and his associates. The conflict of attitudes between Scottish coalitionists and English diehards was still greater.⁷³ Thus, the controversy over coalition was aroused partly by the enduring division between what were loosely termed “North of England” and “South of England” attitudes in the Conservative party.

The opinions of the three groups are compared in table 1, in which the parliamentary divisions which revealed differences of principle among Conservatives are analyzed. Left-wing and right-wing positions are distinguishable on each issue. Right-wingers, for example, were especially insistent on government retrenchment, keen to restrict the trade unions’ right to levy contributions to the Labour party, critical of government expenditure on social welfare, and hostile to nationalism in Ireland and the Empire and to trade relations with Russia. But members’ opinions were also liable to be influenced by loyalty to the government on all except the trade union issue, on which the government was neutral. Therefore, the government’s stand on each issue is indicated. Fortunately, the difference between the proportions of ministers in the coalitionist and “other”

⁷⁰ Michael Kinnear, *The British Voter: An Atlas and Survey since 1885* (London, 1968), pp. 82-83, 104-5.

⁷¹ *Times*, March 10, 1922, p. 14 (re Scotland), and December 5, 1923, p. 14 (re Bristol); Bonar Law Papers, 32/3/10 (re Liverpool); Chamberlain Papers, 33/2/4, 10 (re Yorkshire and Midlands); C. Crump to Steel-Maitland (re Dorset), July 25, 1921, Steel-Maitland Papers (n. 34 above).

⁷² R. Churchill, *Lord Derby, King of Lancashire* (London, 1960), p. 474; Bayford Diary, January 28, 1923. According to Kinnear, “The British Voter,” p. 96, Conservatives and Coalition Liberals cooperated in 159 seats and conflicted in fifty-five.

⁷³ Great Britain, *Hansard’s Parliamentary Debates*, 5th ser., 152 (1922): 2358-59; J.P. Croal to R. Horne, August 14, 1922, Chamberlain Papers, 33/2/2; J. Gretton to Hewins, November 19, 1922, Hewins Papers, Sheffield University, Sheffield.

TABLE I
Opinions of Diehards, Coalitionists, and Other Conservative M.P.'s, 1920-22

Issues and Opinions	Groups (Percentages of Each Group)		
	Diehards	Coalitionists	Others
Government expenditure, February 13, 1920:			
Left-wing (govt.)	23	40	34
Right-wing	18	...	2
Absent	59	60	64
Government expenditure, December 9, 1920:			
Left-wing (govt.)	43	60	56
Right-wing	32	3	4
Absent	25	36	40
Extension of powers of Ministry of Health and local authorities over health and housing, November 9, 1920:			
Left-wing (govt.)	2	16	17
Right-wing	43	7	19
Absent	55	77	63
Unemployed dependents' allowances, November 1, 1921:			
Left-wing	6	8	8
Right-wing (govt.)	13	35	27
Absent	81	57	65
Old-age pensions means test, April 4, 1922:			
Left-wing	...	5	3
Right-wing (govt.)	28	43	33
Absent	72	52	64
Schoolteachers' pensions, May 16, 1922:			
Left-wing	19	5	8
Right-wing (govt.)	30	40	27
Absent	51	56	66
Trade unions' levy for Labour party, May 19, 1922:			
Left-wing	...	...	...
Right-wing	64	34	41
Absent	36	66	59
Ulster self-government (as an essential accompani- ment to Home Rule for South Ireland), May 18, 1920:			
Left-wing (govt.)	18	43	34
Right-wing	43	7	14
Absent	39	50	53
Irish disorders, June 26, 1922:			
Left-wing (govt.)	4	73	56
Right-wing	85	6	13
Absent	11	22	31
Suppression of Amritsar demonstration, July 8, 1920:			
Left-wing (govt.)	9	31	27
Right-wing	52	28	28
Absent	39	41	44
Policy at Genoa conference (particularly trade with Russia), April 3, 1922:			
Left-wing (govt.)	17	78	69
Right-wing	43	1	2
Absent	40	20	30

categories is not enough to be significant.⁷⁴ The numbers of votes include tellers and are expressed in percentages (to the nearest whole number) of each group.

The table shows, predictably, that the diehards stood distinctly to the right on a number of issues: government expenditure, Irish and colonial self-government, relations with Russia, and the trade union political levy. In parliamentary debates, it was on Irish and imperial issues that the diehards differed most explicitly from other Conservatives.⁷⁵ But the coalitionists cannot be so easily labeled. They were not even distinguished, as a group, by hostility to organized labor. Admittedly, they included some outstanding critics of the trade union levy, like Sir R. Burton Chadwick, Sir Warden Chilcott, and John Remer, but apparently in a somewhat lower proportion than among other Conservatives. It included some keen social reformers, like certain of the New Members Coalition Group. Yet on the social reform issues in the table (the third to the sixth), it and the other groups gave no sign that they differed from each other in opinion, and were consistent only in their differing degrees of loyalty to the government. Only on Irish issues did the coalitionists show themselves markedly more progressive than other Conservatives. Other evidence suggests that many coalitionists saw the Irish treaty as an admirable achievement.⁷⁶ As the treaty was also the diehards' main grievance against the government, it evidently became a test of Conservatives' attitudes to the coalition. It is clear, then, that resistance to Labour was not the only basic point at issue in the coalition controversy.

There emerge two fundamental differences in attitude between coalitionists and other Conservatives. One, which is shown consistently in the table, was greater loyalty to the government. The evidence of letters, memoirs, and biographies shows, moreover, that coalitionists tended to feel special sympathy with the government's difficulties and special admiration for the party leaders, especially Lloyd George.⁷⁷ This combination of party and personal loyalty helps to explain why many coalitionists openly sympathized with Chamberlain after the Carlton meeting, while remaining loyal to the party. The other difference in attitude, which is only partly reflected in the table, was a greater recognition that the

⁷⁴ Ten ministers in the first category and fourteen in the second in October 1922. The division lists are in Great Britain, *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, 5th ser., 125: 469-72; 135: 2581-84; 134: 1143-46; 147: 1669-72; 152: 2177-82; 154: 325-29; 154: 769-72; 129: 1303-6; 131: 1817-20; 155: 1807-12; 152: 199-206.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 152: 2360-61.

⁷⁶ J. D. Birchall to Lord R. Cecil, March 1, 1922, Steel-Maitland Papers (n. 71 above); Sir J. T. Agg-Gardner, *Some Parliamentary Recollections* (London, 1927), p. 73; Coote, *Companion of Honour* (n. 27 above), p. 74.

⁷⁷ Sir W. M. Conway to Cecil, March 1, 1922, Steel-Maitland Papers; P. Bull, *Bulls in the Meadows* (London, 1957), pp. 243-44.

broad issue of collectivism versus individualism was gaining in importance, and that the Irish and imperial issues, with which the diehards were preoccupied, held relatively little interest for the postwar electorate.⁷⁸ This disagreement over priorities was, no doubt, connected with the differences in the coalitionists' social backgrounds and in the types of constituency which they represented. Thus, the coalitionists were especially responsive, because of their backgrounds and their attitudes, to changing social and political conditions.

The National Unionist Association—both the central bodies and the constituency associations—showed more hostility to coalition than the parliamentary party. Admittedly, the NUA was divided at both levels. The executives of local associations were frequently divided within themselves and also differed in their attitudes according to region.⁷⁹ But their hostility to coalition was so great on balance that it is almost certain that their delegates would have defeated Chamberlain's policy at the party conference which was due in November. As all could see, the government's proposed election was timed so as to avoid this conference.⁸⁰ The National Executive reacted unanimously on October 18 by summoning an emergency conference. In fact, the local executives had already done much to undermine Chamberlain's position by their pressure on M.P.'s. Diehard sympathizers were active in many local executives, and even small bodies of them could influence members or prospective candidates.⁸¹ Indeed, constituency pressure was regarded by many—including Chamberlain, Bonar Law, and the chief whip, Leslie Wilson—as the main cause of the coalition's downfall.⁸² But to take so strong a view would surely be to neglect the evidence that members were, from 1921, turning against coalition of their own accord.⁸³ The conflict between the leader and the mass organization in 1922 was perhaps the most serious that has until the present day occurred in the Conservative party. It was caused not only by the coalition question, but also by an enduring difference in attitudes. For Stanley Baldwin, as for Chamberlain, the local executives and the party conference formed an obstacle to the modernization of the party. The executives tended to be socially exclusive, narrowly partisan, and too concerned with prewar issues, like Ulster and the House of Lords. Chamber-

⁷⁸ Great Britain, *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, 5th ser., 2385-86; Chamberlain to the king, November 11, 1921, Chamberlain Papers, 15/6/20. There may well have been individual exceptions to this generalization.

⁷⁹ *Times*, March 13, 1922, p. 12.

⁸⁰ Wilson to Younger, October 5, 1922, Bayford Papers; Griffith-Boscawen (n. 66 above), pp. 251-52.

⁸¹ Kinnear, "The Diehards, 1921-22" (n. 56 above), pp. 10-11, 20.

⁸² Chamberlain Papers, 18/1/35, 33/2/26; *Times*, October 24, 1922, p. 18.

⁸³ Bayford Diary, June 24, 1921; R. Blake, *The Unknown Prime Minister* (London, 1955), p. 439.

lain's view, which seems plausible, is that the war had increased their social isolation by interrupting recruitment to the local parties, while bringing new issues to the fore and expanding the electorate.⁸⁴

The division in the Conservative party remained potentially dangerous for two years after the Carlton Club meeting. The danger was largely due to the possibility of reunion between the giants of British politics—the Conservatives, Chamberlain, Balfour, Birkenhead, and Sir Robert Horne, and the Liberals, Lloyd George and Winston Churchill—who had been thrown into the wilderness by the Carlton meeting. The fact that the danger did not materialize was due primarily to the decisive strengthening of the anticoalitionists by that meeting. Coalition was now opposed by many moderate Conservatives, including several of those who had advanced to front rank in place of the ousted leaders. Moreover, coalitionist M.P.'s were probably diminished by the 1922 election.⁸⁵ Anyway, a coalition policy was obviously pointless while the Conservative party had a parliamentary majority. Chamberlain, and most of the fifty or so Conservatives who openly sympathized with him, accepted this fact. Although some Chamberlainites, including Chamberlain himself, remained ready to attack the Conservative government in very damaging ways, they refrained from acting as a group.⁸⁶ But the leading Chamberlainites still believed in the long-term policy of a Liberal alliance. They found their chance to resume it after the new Conservative leader, Stanley Baldwin, lost a general election on a protectionist platform in December 1923.

When the Labour party consequently came to power, without a parliamentary majority, the Conservatives faced the dangers which Chamberlain had predicted in 1922. Perhaps most of them were made anxious by the fact that Labour could now choose its ground for a general election. Probably all were disturbed by the prospect of weak, minority government for an indefinite time to come. The *Times* clearly expressed a widespread view on December 10, when it argued that the existing party system was so plainly unsatisfactory that “sooner or later there will be such alliance . . . as will result in the reconstruction of two parties.” The Conservatives’

⁸⁴ H. Molson, “Parties in Conference: Conservatives at Bristol,” *Nineteenth Century* 116 (November 1934): 469–77; memo from J. C. Davidson, July 1, 1927, Baldwin Papers, vol. 59, pp. 138–41, Cambridge University Library, Cambridge; Chamberlain to Lord Long, March 6, 1922, Chamberlain Papers, 33/1/33.

⁸⁵ Assuming that the by-election trend of 1919–22 remained operative. Moreover, a high proportion of the coalitionists at the Carlton meeting were not reelected (47 percent, compared with 39 percent of other Conservatives).

⁸⁶ Reports and attendance lists of avowedly coalitionist dinners in honor of Chamberlain (*Times*, November 13, 1922, p. 18) and Lord Balfour (*Morning Post*, March 26, 1923, p. 8); Bonar Law Papers, 116/2. I believe that Cowling exaggerates the importance of the half-hearted moves by some Chamberlainites (excluding Chamberlain) to prevent Baldwin from becoming leader in May 1923, and to replace him in December (n. 2 above, pp. 250, 335).

obvious course, then, was to appeal for aid against Labour from Liberals and nonparty moderates. But the question whether they should make concessions to gain this aid divided them throughout Labour's term of office.

Chamberlain, newly admitted to the Conservative shadow cabinet, had a clear purpose. "Our business now is to smash the Liberal Party," he wrote on January 28, "two-thirds of it is already Labour in all but name." He aimed to win over "the other third."⁸⁷ He used his senior position in the party to weaken the diehards and keener protectionists who meant to hinder this aim. Thus, he virtually took charge of the shadow cabinet's meeting in February which jettisoned Baldwin's protectionist policy and he later curbed the influence of his protectionist colleague, Leopold Amery.⁸⁸ He urged his personal followers in the House of Commons to counteract diehard activities.⁸⁹ He found justification for his policy in the formation of a group of about twenty Liberal members—all former coalitionists—who came to vote normally with the Conservatives. They had a potential leader in Churchill, who was at the time without a seat. Chamberlain proclaimed that the Conservatives' hope of regaining power lay in an alliance with these "Liberal Imperialists" and with the voters who sympathized with them.⁹⁰ While denying that he wanted another coalition, which would obviously be opposed by too much of the party, Chamberlain, with his like-minded colleagues, appealed in public speeches for Liberal support.⁹¹ He also pressed Baldwin, with little success, to do likewise.⁹² The strength of Chamberlain's case is shown by the fact that as late as October 11—just before the Conservatives' unprecedented election victory—most observers still thought it unlikely that they would win an independent majority.⁹³

Nevertheless, Chamberlain's policy became highly controversial when it was advocated by Churchill in the course of his attempts to enter parliament as an "Independent Anti-Socialist." Churchill proposed to scrap what he dismissed as "sectional impedimenta" between Liberals and Conservatives, in order to defeat the socialist menace and to make possible stable, majority government. In March, in his contest against an officially adopted Conservative in the Abbey division, he also attacked Chamberlain's old enemy, "the party machine," by disputing the

⁸⁷ Chamberlain to S. Hoare, Chamberlain Papers, 35/4/17.

⁸⁸ R. Churchill (n. 72 above), p. 565; Chamberlain Papers, 24/6/1.

⁸⁹ Chamberlain to Sir W. Chilcott, April 1, 1924, Chamberlain Papers, 35/4/14.

⁹⁰ Wilson (n. 1 above), pp. 266-67; *Times*, March 27, 1924, p. 14; *Evening News*, July 30, 1924, p. 4; *Nation*, August 2, 1924, p. 559.

⁹¹ *Times*, May 10, 1924, p. 14; September 26, 1924, p. 14.

⁹² Chamberlain to Baldwin, July 18, 1924, Chamberlain Papers, 35/5/1.

⁹³ Chamberlain to Ivy Chamberlain, October 11, 1924, *ibid.*, 6/1/564; *Nation*, October 11, 1924, p. 47; October 25, p. 13.

mediocre choice of candidate by a particularly unrepresentative association.⁹⁴ Save in this respect, his was the old coalition policy in its least attractive form, with its opportunism, its class appeal, and its negative character. The last fault, which was singled out by anticoalitionists, was especially noticeable at a time when many Conservatives were worried by their failure to appeal to the working class.⁹⁵ Nevertheless, he won strong support. In the Abbey contest, he was actively supported by several Liberal members and—according to his own account—by nearly thirty Conservative members, who included some noted right-wingers.⁹⁶ Probably many more Conservatives sympathized with him quietly.

The resulting controversy was embittered by the interaction between the question of a Liberal alliance and the question of Baldwin's continuance as leader. Baldwin's position was shaky, and his potential rivals were all, in Amery's words, "tarred with the Coalitionist brush."⁹⁷ Anticoalitionists saw Churchill's candidacy as an attack on Baldwin and another attempt to form a center party. Those Conservatives who sympathized with Churchill were known to do so because of their discontent with Baldwin's feeble and discredited leadership. This was especially true of one of Chamberlain's followers, Sir Warden Chilcott, and perhaps of others.⁹⁸ Baldwin was embarrassed by the public support given to Churchill by his colleagues, Balfour, Birkenhead, and Horne.⁹⁹ The support for Churchill by the hostile "Press Barons," Lords Beaverbrook and Rothermere, made him suspect a conspiracy. His own part was taken by the *Morning Post* and several diehard members, one of whom, Sir Henry Craik, publicly accused Balfour of knifing Baldwin in the back.¹⁰⁰ In May, the Sunday newspaper, the *People*, quoted Baldwin as making fierce attacks on Churchill, Birkenhead, the press barons, and unnamed "intriguers" for plotting against him. Although Baldwin disowned the report, it was generally seen to reflect many of his suspicions, and it gave

⁹⁴ *Morning Post*, March 6, 1924, p. 8; *Times*, March 6, 1924, p. 13; March 26, 1924, p. 8.

⁹⁵ Maxse to Amery, March 1, 1924, L. Maxse Papers, K. 230, Sussex Record Office, Chichester; editorial in *Morning Post*, March 22, 1924.

⁹⁶ *Times*, March 6, p. 12; W. Churchill, *Thoughts and Adventures* (London, 1932), p. 214. Churchill was supported by two former diehards, J. M. Erskine and E. Harmsworth, and a right-wing independent, Austen Hopkinson. The *Times* and *Morning Post* give the names of eighteen Conservative members who publicly supported Churchill. Chamberlain's sympathy with him was generally suspected.

⁹⁷ Amery to Baldwin, December 8, 1923, Baldwin Papers, 35: 171.

⁹⁸ *Nation*, March 22, 1924, p. 875; *Morning Post*, July 29, p. 9; Chamberlain Papers, 35/4/15.

⁹⁹ K. Middlemas and J. Barnes, *Baldwin: A Biography* (London, 1969), p. 263; I. D. Colvin to Maxse, March 29, 1924, Maxse Papers, K.238. Colvin reported Baldwin to have compared "himself to a 4th Form boy made Head of the School and given 5th Form boys to order about."

¹⁰⁰ Editorials in *Morning Post*, March 12, 19, 1924, p. 16.

ammunition to the anticoalitionists, such as the editor of the *Morning Post*.¹⁰¹

Conservatives became more united in the following months as their problems of leadership and of alliance against Labour resolved themselves. Baldwin's position strengthened, partly because of resentment in the party of the press barons' attacks on him.¹⁰² Alliance with right-wing Liberals ceased to be controversial when, from August onward, they and Conservatives could join wholeheartedly in denouncing bolshevism. By October, on the eve of the election, Conservatives of all shades were advising local associations to be ready to cooperate with Liberals in order to keep out Labour candidates.¹⁰³ Thus, the number of local pacts was much greater than in the last election, when official Conservative policy had inevitably hindered them. But the major regrouping which Chamberlain had hoped for did not occur: there were only twelve Churchillian or "constitutional" candidates.¹⁰⁴ The Conservatives benefited mainly from the Liberal party's inability to compete with them in exploiting the reaction against the Labour government. It was largely because the Liberal party fielded so few candidates that Conservatives had a clear run against Labour in about twice the number of seats as in either of the two previous elections.¹⁰⁵ The general opinion after the election—which seems sound—was that the Conservatives' victory owed very much to Liberal support.¹⁰⁶ Thus, the Conservatives reaped the benefits of coalition while staying independent. Baldwin now closed the schism of 1922 by his generous distribution of governmental posts to Churchill and the Chamberlainites.

After 1924, the fear of coalitionist intrigue was never great enough to influence Conservative policy or cause serious quarrels in the party. But the attitudes and alignments formed during the coalition controversy persisted. Thus, after Baldwin's government was defeated in the 1929 election, Chamberlain and Churchill tried to persuade the shadow cabinet

¹⁰¹ *People*, May 18, 1924, p. 1; Chamberlain's memo of a subsequent talk with Baldwin, Chamberlain Papers, 24/6/3; Chamberlain to Baldwin, May 20, Chamberlain Papers, 24/6/8; T. Driberg, *Beaverbrook* (London, 1956), pp. 182, 195; *Nation*, May 24, 1924, pp. 238, 239.

¹⁰² *Spectator*, May 24, 1924, p. 828.

¹⁰³ *Morning Post*, October 13, 1924, p. 9.

¹⁰⁴ Seven were elected and were immediately absorbed into the Conservative or the Liberal party. See F. W. S. Craig, *British Parliamentary Election Statistics 1918-1968* (Glasgow, 1968), p. 6; *Times*, December 17, 1924, p. 14.

¹⁰⁵ Two hundred seven, compared with 111 in 1922 and 100 in 1923 (*Times*, November 6, 1922, p. 20; November 28, 1923, p. 12; October 20, 1924, p. 14).

¹⁰⁶ *Nation*, November 1, 1924, p. 171; H. Spender, "The General Election: Is Liberalism Dead?" *Fortnightly Review* 116 (December 1924): 731.

to make an agreement with Lloyd George.¹⁰⁷ There are indications that they would have renewed their efforts toward this end,¹⁰⁸ and so re-awakened the old controversy, if they had not been prevented by their party's movement back toward protection. Chamberlain's policy was soon fulfilled in a different way. After the Labour party's second accession to power without a parliamentary majority and the subsequent onset of the Depression, all the basic factors working in favor of coalition regained their strength. In the years 1930–31, a strong contingent of Liberals under Sir John Simon gave priority to the defeat of socialism, and finally, as Liberal Nationals, became firm allies of the Conservatives.¹⁰⁹ In August 1931, the Conservative party as a whole strongly supported the new national government, which it regarded as necessary to resist the Labour party's ruinous economic policies.¹¹⁰ Chamberlain and his supporters could now claim that this revival of coalition had only just saved the country from the disastrous consequences of abandoning it in 1922.¹¹¹ But the new coalition differed from the old in exacting from the Conservative party no clear concessions of policy and, after 1932, comparatively slight concessions of office. The familiar complaints that coalition caused vacillation and compromise were inevitably revived. But on such favorable conditions, most Conservatives came to accept that "national government," with its great electoral advantages, should continue indefinitely.¹¹²

¹⁰⁷ Middlemas and Barnes, pp. 532–33.

¹⁰⁸ As in the case of Lloyd George's attack on the Labour government over the Irwin Declaration (Davidson [n. 49 above], p. 309).

¹⁰⁹ Sir E. Grigg, "Should Liberal Unionism Be Revived?" *Nineteenth Century* 109 (May 1931): 511; Sir J. Simon, *Retrospect* (London, 1952), p. 171.

¹¹⁰ Middlemas and Barnes, pp. 632–33.

¹¹¹ See Chamberlain's foreword to W. Chilcott, *Political Salvation* (London, 1932), p. 10; Lord Conway (n. 25 above), p. 141.

¹¹² Q. Hogg, "National or Conservative?" *Nineteenth Century* 116 (July 1934): 36–37; H. Molson, *ibid.* (November 1934), p. 470 (n. 84 above).